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SYMPOSIUM

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Abstract

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Therefore, Phaedrus, go back to that speech-writing
commander, whose word is the law in this place and

whenever

he loves one can afford to pay with more than endearments;
I tell you there's no gain in an old and a young outcast
staring through the stream at their twenty toes;
refreshing in this heat to pass the time in lessons,
but usually you know I'm paid too for what I recommend...'

'Love is not for money; money is for other things.'

'I said, you know I'm paid too for my advice;
refreshing in this heat to pass the time in dialogue,
staring through his stream to find our twenty toes.
You cannot give my science the love it deserves.'

'You're beginning to repeat yourself; I said I wanted your
not his.'

love,

'I heard you the first time;
look at my wings, I have not seen yours sprout and uncurl.'

'You always talk in poetic devices; say what you mean.'

'Foot, blue veins, used blood, that what you want?
Your tender toes have never worn down stone.'

'He dandles me; he softens my slippers. I see your
big toe is up, the hairy patch, the rising moon.'

'I know, boy, stop this now.'

'And as the water
flows, so will I be a horny man and you be gone...'

Socr. to the youth, hand on knee: 'Look, tell him to cut to the point: love is the highest god of all, without whom men would not know what men may be... and at his next law-giving he should insert a pension for philosophers like me.'

CHANTAL ZABUS

Mending the Schizo-Text: Pidgin in the Nigerian Novel¹

Post-colonial West African writers writing in English may have been too scripturally schizophrenic, too busy with the dichotomy mother tongue/other tongue, to account fully for the presence of auxiliary contact languages in their writing. Yet it is in that space in-between, in the contact language itself, that writers like Kafka and Louis Wolfson² have nestled to redefine writing in the mother tongue. I will here examine how Pidgin has insinuated itself into the very texture of Nigerian writing, at first under the decorative guise of an unobtrusive, 'auxiliary' language confined to dialogues and, subsequently, as the potential vehicle for multi-lingual and cross-cultural hybridized poetics.

I will focus on Nigerian Pidgin English (NPE or EnPi), originally a trade language born out of the contact between English and various other African languages. Its complex origins, which are a major source of disputation among monogenetic and polygenetic theoreticians,³ are only relevant in so far as they explain why Pidgin English in contemporary Nigeria is at present both a first stage in acquiring English and a non-official *lingua franca* which has currency along the West Coast. Its increased creolization and its growing status as a first language (especially in Bendel and Rivers States) find their corollary in the post-colonial Nigerian novel of English expression precariously poised at a historical interface between the neo-colonial upsurge of English or 'english'⁴ and the rehabilitation of indigenous African languages.

The writer's attempt at representing Pidgin as it is spoken in the streets and then at forging a 'pidginized' artistic medium has to be understood against the vast spectrum of post-colonial English language experimentation in the Nigerian novel. These experiments have engendered, at best,